



Ordinary Meeting of Council

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

MAYORAL MINUTE – ITEM S.2 - Carwoola Bushfire Support

QUEANBEYAN-PALERANG REGIONAL COUNCIL
ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL

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****On-site Inspections****

List any inspections or indicate “Nil”

S MAYORAL MINUTES

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LIST OF ATTACHMENTS –

(Copies available from General Manager’s Office on request)

Open Attachments

Nil

Closed Attachments

Nil

MAYORAL MINUTES

S.2 Carwoola Bushfire Support (Ref: C1724181; Author: Overall/Hansen)

Summary

On 17 February 2017, a grass fire burned through 3,144 Ha of land in the Carwoola, Hoskinstown area. The fire destroyed 11 houses and damaged a further 12 houses with a further 45 outbuildings either destroyed or damaged.

To assist with the recovery, Council has established the Carwoola Bushfire Appeal to raise funds that will be provided directly to those who have lost their homes in this fire. In addition to establishing the appeal, it is appropriate that Council also donate \$10,000 to the appeal.

Council may also assist residents and occupiers by deferring rates, waiving fees to dispose of the additional waste from destroyed homes as well as waiving fees that would apply to the rebuilding of the homes that have been destroyed.

Recommendation

1. That Council establish the Carwoola Bushfire Appeal with all funds collected through the appeal going to those property owners and occupiers whose homes have been destroyed or substantively damaged by the fire and any administrative costs associated with the Appeal be covered by the Council.
2. That a Carwoola Bushfire Appeal Panel be established comprising the General Manager or nominee, a member of the Audit Committee, and up to two members of the community. Once formed the Panel shall determine the operational framework for the Appeal.
3. That Council donate \$10,000 to the Carwoola Bushfire Appeal.
4. That Council provide the opportunity for those property owners whose home has been destroyed or substantively damaged to apply for postponing of rates through the Hardship Policy.
5. That until a replacement dwelling is occupied, the Council meet any waste charges applied to a property where the dwelling has been destroyed or is unable to be occupied.
6. That the following application fees associated with the construction of a replacement dwelling or partial rebuild of a substantively damaged dwelling be met by the Council:
 - a. Development application fees under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act
 - b. Section 68 Activity application fees under the Local Government Act
 - c. Any applicable notification fees
7. That Council approach State Government about waiving the long service levy and planning levy fees payable at the time of lodging a development application for a replacement dwelling house for the current owner of the land.

8. For a period of two months from the date of the fire, Council will cover the waste disposal charge at its Bungendore transfer facility for the disposal of general waste and debris generated as a direct result of the fire subject to that material not being contaminated with any form of asbestos material.
 9. That Council advise the owners of properties destroyed or substantively damaged in the Carwoola Bushfire of the decision and the relevant processes and procedures.
 10. That concessions 4 to 9 above also be applied to the Currandooley Fire.
 11. Where Council has agreed to meet the cost of services specified in 5, 6 and 8 above those costs be met from Council's donations budget.
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Background

On 17 February 2017, a grass fire burned through 3,144 Ha of land in the Carwoola, Hoskinstown area. The fire destroyed 11 houses and damaged a further 12 houses with a further 45 outbuildings either destroyed or damaged.

Many properties have been affected by the fire with impacts also on livestock, vegetation, native animals, roads, services and the amenity of the area.

The impact of this fire will be felt by the community and those affected for some time and considerable time and resources will be required to assist with the recovery effort and the re-establishment of homes and facilities enjoyed by the affected residents.

To assist with the recovery, Council has established the Carwoola Bushfire Appeal to raise funds that will be provided directly to those who have lost their homes in this fire. In addition to establishing the appeal, it is appropriate that Council also donate \$10,000 to the appeal.

A panel should be set up to administer and oversee the distribution of any funds raised during the appeal. The panel should comprise the General Manager or nominee, a member of the Audit Committee, and up to two members of the community. The panel will have the capacity to consider cases of hardship.

Council may also assist residents and occupiers by deferring rates, waiving fees to dispose of the additional waste from destroyed homes as well as waiving application fees that would apply to the rebuilding of the homes that have been destroyed.

Implications

Legal

Rebuilding is subject to the current Palerang LEP and development control provisions. New dwellings and other buildings will require approval and need to be constructed to the present day standards.

Policy

The Localised Natural Disaster Relief Policy 2016 provides guidance for relief during times of natural disaster however the Carwoola bushfire is outside the eligibility conditions detailed in the Policy.

Compliance with Hardship Policy for rates relief.

S.2 Carwoola Bushfire Support (Ref: C1724181; Author: Overall/Hansen) (Continued)

Financial

Any reduction or waiving of fees will be at a cost to Council. It is recommended that any costs that are borne by Council be offset against Council's donation budget. Note: this is not the Appeal Fund, Council has separate funding in its operational plan to meet the costs of donations.

It is recommended by staff that the property be classified as vacant land for charging purposes from the time of the fire until the new dwelling becomes occupied.

Application fees for rebuilding destroyed or partially damaged can be waived except for those statutory State Government fees. Fees for inspections and construction certificate fees cannot be waived. As these services are competitive and can be provided by private businesses as well as Council it would contravene the National Competition Policy to waive these fees for residents wishing to rebuild on their land following the demolition of their house and remediation of their block.

It is also suggested that a program be put in place where a dedicated planner and building surveyor will take these applicants who are going to rebuild their house, through the DA and rebuilding process and use the experience from the ACT and Blue Mountains City Council assistance programs for owner rebuilding after the bushfire disasters.

General Waste Gate Fee costs

It is difficult to estimate the cost of waiving the gate fee to the waste transfer station as the volume of waste that may be delivered to the transfer station is unknown. Waste materials impacted by asbestos materials (most homes built before the mid 1980's) cannot be accepted at any Council waste facilities and the owner will need to make separate arrangements for disposal of asbestos contaminated building debris through their insurer. All waste will be directed to the Bungendore Transfer Station as there is insufficient capacity to manage high waste volumes at the other transfer stations. Residents will also be required to show they are a resident or landowner in the fire affected area. Specific times for delivering materials to the transfer station may be required to be organised to ensure the centre has the resources in place to deal with the materials being brought in.

Rates Hardship Policy

In offering assistance under Council's Rates Hardship Policy, the following would apply

- The rates would be postponed (not written off) and no interest would apply
- Applications would have to be reviewed every 12 months
- Hardship support only applies to ratepayers who have suffered the loss of their house.
- Hardship applications would go back to the date of the fire.
- Applicants would have to fill in a Hardship Application from our website
- Council would recoup the outstanding rates when the house is sold

Attachments

Nil